

Comparing Myself With Other People, Part 2 - Romans 3:13-18 – July 24th, 2011

- Today's teaching will be part two in a series that we had begun last week, titled; "Comparing Myself with Other People."
- If you wanted to subtitle this teaching, it could be something like; "The Problems it Causes in my Life," or "The Danger it Brings into my Life."
- Here in the text that we have before us, the Apostle Paul is addressing these problems with a Jewish constituency who are doing just that.

- It's for this reason that we see several problems that it caused, and the dangers that came packaged with it as it relates to Jews and Gentiles.
- Paul will now confront the Jews who were comparing themselves to the Gentiles, and the problems it caused for both them and the Gentiles.
- Beginning in verse 9, we looked at two of these problems last week, so by way of both review and introduction, we'll set the stage with them.

1. I will see myself as better than others (Verse 9)

- Paul rhetorically asks, then answers the question, by way of conclusion, that Jews are no better than the Gentiles because both are under sin.

2. I will see myself as a good person (Verses 10-12)

- Paul quotes scripture saying; no one's righteous, or understands, nor seeks God. All turned away, are worthless, and no one is, or does good.

3. I will see myself as someone I'm not (Verses 13-18)

(13) "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." (14) "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." (15) "Their feet are swift to shed blood; (16) ruin and misery mark their ways, (17) and the way of peace they do not know." (18) "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

- v13 Paul gets quite graphic describing how mans throats are open graves their tongues practice deceit, and the poison of vipers is on their lips.
- v14-15 He continues the graphic detail saying how mans mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, and that their feet are swift to shed blood.
- v16-18 He says, ruin and misery mark their ways, because they do not know the way of peace, nor is there any fear of God before their eyes.

- When I come upon passages of scripture such as the one that's here before us, I will inquire of the Lord as to why it's said, in the way it's said.
- In other words, why do we have such detail in Paul's description of mans condition? Because God is making a diagnosis to give the prognosis.
- Just as the physician will look down our throats so too does the Great Physician look down our spiritual throats to diagnose our state of health.

- So, what does God find when He conducts this examination? Man is terminally ill, and beyond cure because his throat is like an open grave.
- His tongue practices deceit, his lips have the poison of a viper, his mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, and his feet are swift to shed blood.
- This is why there is no fear of God before his eyes, in that man cannot see God with his eyes, because he sees himself as a god in his eyes.

- We'll come back to this in just a moment, but first I want to point out something that could be easily missed at first glance related to body parts.
- Notice how Paul uses throats, tongues, lips, mouths, feet, and finally, eyes. Why? God is showing us, how He sees us, through His eyes.
- If the truth be known, God, Who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, has been doing this, with us, since the beginning in the garden.

Genesis 3:1-7 NKJV Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" (2) And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; (3) but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " (4) Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. (5) For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (6) So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (7) Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

Matthew 6:22-23 NIV "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. (23) But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

- It starts with the eyes! If I see myself through my own eyes, and not God's eyes, I'm deceiving myself, believing myself to be someone I'm not.
- How I see me, affects and infects every part of me metaphorically, spiritually. Like Eve, I eat with my mouth, that which is pleasant to my eyes.
- Thus the infection in my throat, the deceit of my tongue, the poison on my lips, the curse from my mouth, leads to the blood, shed by my feet.

- On Thursday nights we're studying through the book of Deuteronomy. I find it interesting that chapters eight and nine speak to this, and of this.
- God had to humble the Israelites by showing them the deceitful wickedness of their heart, so they would see themselves as God saw them.
- Only God knows man's heart, and man looks only on the outward appearance and cannot see the heart, so God shows man what He sees.
- He does this because man becomes proud outwardly, and in order to humble him, He must show him; "him," inwardly, as He sees him, truly.

- This is how, and why, man has the propensity to deceive himself, into thinking more highly of himself, and in so doing puffs himself up in pride.
- When I'm self-deceived in this way, I'm then disabled in every way, and my disabilities are many, the chief of which is, I'm visually impaired.
- My blindness, will be proportionate to my haughtiness. Because I've been disabled in this way, I'm not enabled in any way, to see my true self.

- It's for this reason that God must show me, me! Left to my self-deceptive pride I have no hope of seeing myself nor my need to humble myself.
- I'm keenly aware that, by now, you're wondering how it is I can speak so authoritatively on the subject matter of pride. Well, I'm a pro at pride!
- I know what pride looks like, feels like, even smells like because of the foul odor that's emitted from the proud pours of my proud heart and life.

- I suppose you could say this is the why behind the what of the strong words from the Apostle Paul. He gets to the heart of the matter, literally.
- He gets to, and puts His finger on, the root cause of seeing oneself as someone they're not, namely comparing themselves with other people.
- God deals not with symptoms on the surface, only sin beneath the surface, and the diagnosis is a heart of pride, and the prognosis is death.

Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

As one commentator so aptly said it; "Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow, and the parent from which all the other sins come."